

JOHN BOWEN

TO

TRAGEDY.

By a GENTLEMAN of SCOTLAND.

James Boswell Esq.

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MDCLXI.

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TO

JAMES BOSWELL, Esq;

MY DEAR SIR,

IF *Adam Fitzadam* presumed to inscribe a volume of the *WORLD* to MR MOORE, I can see no reason why I, a *Gentleman of Scotland*, may not take much the same liberty with MR BOSWELL.

Do not imagine, Sir, because this address comes in the form of a dedication, that I have been invoking the goddess of Flattery. Indeed I have no intention to pay you compliments: not that your discernment is so nice as to reject them with indignation; but because it is my sincere opinion that they would do you harm. To entertain agreeable notions of one's own character, is a great incentive to act with propriety and spirit. But I should be sorry to contribute in any degree, to your acquiring an excess of self-sufficiency.

To talk thus freely, is certainly a proof that I wish
you



you well: and I make no doubt, Sir, but you consider me as your very good friend; although some people, — and those too not destitute of wisdom, — will not scruple to insinuate the contrary.

Be that as it may, give me leave to thank you for your particular kindness to me; and chiefly for the profound respect with which you have always treated me.

I own indeed, that when I have boasted of a glimpse of regard from the finest eyes, and most amiable heart in the world; or, to display my extensive erudition, have quoted Greek, Latin, and French sentences, one after another with astonishing celerity; or have got into my *Old-hock humour*, and fallen a-raving about princes and lords, knights and geniuses, ladies of quality and harpsichords; — you, with a peculiar comic smile, have gently reminded me of the *importance of a man to himself*, and silyly left the room, with the witty DEAN lying open at — *P. P. clerk of this parish*.

The following ODE which courts your acceptance, is on a subject grave and solemn; and therefore may be considered by many people, as not so well suited to
your

your volatile disposition. But I, Sir, who enjoy the pleasure of your intimate acquaintance, know that many of your hours of retirement are devoted to thought; and that you can as strongly relish the productions of a serious Muse, as the most brilliant fallies of sportive Fancy.

As to my merit as a poet, I shall only say, that while I am certain of YOUR approbation, I shall be entirely satisfied: and if I can any how improve the noble feelings of that honest open heart of yours, I shall reckon myself infinitely happy.

I must now bid you farewell, with an assurance, that while you continue the man that you are, you shall ever find me, with the greatest sincerity and affection,

MY DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

O D E

ODE TO TRAGEDY.

I.

GODDESS supreme ! whose power divine
The yielding Passions all obey,
On me, O ! with thy influence shine !
O ! send a spark to fire each lay !
A soul by nature form'd to feel
Grief sharper than the tyrants steel,
And bosom big with swelling thought,
From ancient lore's remembrance brought,
Prompt me with pinions bold my way to wing,
And like the sky-lark at heaven's gate to sing.

II.

Come, mistress of superior grace,
Daughter in hour sublime of Jove !
O'er the strong features of whose face
With air of distant awe we rove :
While mingling softness to the eye
Seems o'er each lineament to fly ;
As when the sun's resplendent rays
In summer glow with redd'ning blaze,
A floating blue-ting'd cloud does intervene,
And thro' a veil the fire of light is seen.

B

III.

III.

Come, Muse ! while Terror's ghastly form,
 And Pity, gentle maid, appear,
 Or to assault the soul by storm,
 Or steal the generous heart-sprung tear :
 While they attendant on thy state,
 Submissive thy behests await,
 Dread as a hideous lion chain'd,
 And Pity's looks with crying stain'd,
 O in thy dazzling majesty advance,
 Thou who thro' nature shoot'st with eagle glance.

IV.

'Tis thine the soul to humanize
 By fancied wo ; -- Goddess ! 'tis thine
 To bid compassion melt the eyes,
 And all the feelings soft refine.
 'Tis thine, with great Apollo's skill,
 The inmost springs of life to thrill ;
 'Tis thine to move a breast of stone,
 And make a brazen heart to own,
 That solemn tragic numbers are of force,
 To stop a villain in his bloody course.

V.

V.

Behold the buskin'd bard of Greece !
 Th' enchantment of whose tuneful shell
 Could sooth the mind to gentle peace,
 Or rouse to fury sprung from hell !
 See in his kindling look, the fire
 Bright flaming from his golden lyre !
 Hark how he sweeps the strings ! — such tones
 Nature design'd affliction's groans.
 I feel, when now he wakes another strain,
 The love of glory panting in each vein !

VI.

Unhappy Oedipus ! thy fate —
 — Gods ! for one mortal how severe ! —
 While Sophocles deigns to relate,
 In pomp of sadness shall appear.
 The direful oracle we dread,
 While on thy bare dejected head,
 We see the black tempest'ous shower
 Of Fortune's wrath incessant pour :
 We see a wretch o'er boiling eddies tost,
 Till in a gulf of wo the victim's lost !

VII.

VII.

O say, thou arbitress of mind,
 What sympathy unites our race,
 That even in savages we find
 This wondrous tender, human grace ?
 How is the heart of man so soft ?
 — Which I, alas ! have felt too oft. —
 How are we mov'd with others' woe ?
 How do the streams of pity flow ?
 How does the breast with throbs spontaneous beat ?
 How is compassion found so strangely sweet ?

VIII.

Hail ! father of the British stage !
 Shakespear ! to whom shall still belong
 Thro' each successive wond'ring age,
 The glories of immortal song !
 Melpomene, with aspect mild,
 With joyful hope exulting smil'd,
 What time on Avon's banks she saw
 Thee young thy first rude sketches draw
 Of richest poetry, whose strains sublime
 Already aim'd th' empyreum's height to climb.

IX.

Genius unbounded as the sky,
 That spreads itself from pole to pole,
 Disdains a formal course to fly,
 Or sweep the ground with lazy stole.
 The Stagyrte may preach in vain,
 And tasteless critics cold complain
 That thou all rules of art hast broke,
 And flung away the stated yoke ;
 To the kind heart alone thou dost appeal,
 And bidst th' ingenuous there conviction feel.

X.

Say thou ! th' illustrious poet's shade !
 Whether old Westminster's fam'd dome
 Thou haunt'st, or where his childhood stray'd,
 And where his bones have fix'd their home ;
 O say from whence such powers he drew,
 By which the universe he knew :
 Ye ghosts, and beings of the brain !
 Witches, and all the magic train !
 You he could lively paint with pencil nice,
 And scourge, by force infernal, blasted vice !

XI.

Greatest of bards! O hear my prayer!
 Gleam on my soul with chearing view:
 Yet think not that I rashly dare
 One of thy footsteps to pursue.
 How have I, in my youthful age,
 Ador'd to see the passions rage!
 As when her swain with Juliet strove,
 Who felt the anguish most of love;
 Or when Old England's annals were display'd,
 And Piercy storm'd in martial fire array'd.

XII.

Forgive, tho' I forbear to tell
 Of you, ye other bards who shine,
 Forgive tho' I forbear to swell
 With croud of names the founding line.
 When Oroonoko's godlike soul,
 By misery distracted, roll
 In gloomy blood-streak'd eyes we see,
 Can any bosom ruthless be?
 Will not a hapless orphan make us weep?
 Or Randolph's lady plung'd in sorrows deep?

XIII.

(II)

XIII.

Augusta's theatres ! — with pride
How often have I witness'd there,
The lucid pearls of pity glide
From lovely eyes of British fair !
How often have I raptur'd seen
The passion of the present queen
With uncontroll'd applauses loud
Burn in each feature of the croud !
Lo ! boundless liberty submissive deigns —
Triumph how great ! to wear the actor's chains !

XIV.

See Garrick in poor Lear rave,
Borne down the tide of sore distress !
He seems 'gainst each o'erwhelming wave
With hoary majesty to press !
See Sheridan in Denmark's heir ! —
Wide spreads the prospect of despair !
With dusky clouds the sky is hung !
Pale horror falters on his tongue !
Torn is his wretched mind ! ev'n now I view
Cold, pain-wrought drops his mournful face bedew !

XV.

XV.

O why by Cam's delightful streams,
 Does * he who sung *Elfrida's* wo,
 Indulge his warm, poetic dreams,
 But to the private eye to show
 Why does the moralizing train †
 Him from the world's just glass detain?
 Beams not bright beauty brighter still,
 From the high summit of yon hill
 Drive him, Ambition, from th' inglorious seat,
 Tho' *Hurd* approve his indolent retreat.

XVI.

Goddeſs ſupreme ! my vows attend,
 O let the honour'd taſk be mine,
 Thy temple trembling to aſcend ;
 Trembling to offer at thy ſhrine.
 While idle Folly's glittering train
 Baſk in the ſunſhine, ever vain,
 Like Juno's bird ſo pert and gay,
 Their gaudy plumage ſtill diſplay ;
 O ! let me viſit oft thy ſacred ſtore,
 And in ecſtatic heat intranc'd adore !

.XV. Mr Maſon.

† The ancient chorus.

F I N I S.



